

THREE LECTURES,

THEOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL.

I. On Misrepresentations of the Incomprehensibility of GOD.

II. On the Parable, *erroneously* called the Relapsing Dæmoniac.

III. On the Evangelical Spirit.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for W. FLEXNEY, opposite Gray's-Inn-Gate, Holborn; E. and C. DILLY,
in the Poultry; and J. SWAN, opposite Norfolk-Street, in the Strand.

M.DCC.LXXII.

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THEOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL

I. On the Interpretations of the Incomprehensibility of God.

II. On the Parable of the Tares, ⁵⁴ commonly called the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

III. On the Evangelical Spirit.



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And former Chaplain of the Faculty of Divinity.

LONDON.

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Printed by W. B. E. Smith, at the University Press, Cambridge.

M. 1854.

L E C T U R E I.

On Misrepresentations of the Incompre-
hensibility of G O D.

LECTURE I

On the Mission of the Holy Spirit
to the Church and the World

J O B xxxvii. 23, 24.

Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out. He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear him. He respecteth not any that are wise of heart.

A Long and eloquent speech does not usually conclude in sentences so remarkably broken and concise as these which finish the speech of Elihu. A circumstance, however, which will perhaps be accounted for. Elihu had taken upon him, with very good pretensions, to be the moderator of the great dispute between Job and his three friends, and in the course of his harangue had censured both him and them with great freedom and judgment. The beginning of the following chapter informs us, that the next speaker was God himself. V. 1. *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.* It is remarkable that the relator does not give us any description of the Deity making his approach at this time, nor so much as mentions the least solemn interval between the ending of the speech of Elihu, and the beginning of the speech of God. But as soon as the former is concluded, it follows, without farther preface, *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:* as if the Lord had been visibly present the whole time. And yet we read not, in any former part of the story, that the Divine Being had before made any visible approach. This may be thought a deficiency in the relator. I apprehend, however, that a close attention to several passages towards the conclusion of Elihu's speech will set this matter in a satisfactory light. I think we may perceive Elihu very plainly describing the approach of the Divinity; and that this happened whilst Elihu was finishing his argument, or rather,

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perhaps, put an end to it. If so, it is a beauty in the composition, that this incident of the approach of the Deity is described by one of the interlocutors, and not repeated in form by an interposition of the writer. It is proper, at least, to the dramatic species: in which agreeable form the incomparable author has delivered this authentic history. Elihu very naturally draws his arguments from objects at present around him. It seems, a storm was gathering, which preceded the approach of God, and by degrees denoted it, till he spoke out of the whirlwind. Elihu, going on with his illustration of the power and supremacy of God, adduces into his argument the present aspect of the sky, now lowering, and menacing a speedy tempest. For it is well known that Elihu, before he concludes, gives a fine description of a storm. And I submit it as worthy of enquiry, whether it is to be considered, in the usual acceptation, as a description of storms in general, or, as I conceive it, of a storm then present, which engaged his notice as an apt illustration of his argument, and was the solemn prelude to the presence of God. *With clouds, says he, he covereth the light, and commandeth it not to shine, by the cloud (or that cloud) that cometh betwixt. At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place. It follows, Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. i. e. Hark to that hollow blast of the wind, or that clap of thunder. The progress of the storm is afterwards regularly described. It follows, Hearken unto this, oh Job! stand still, and consider the works of God.* Presently, as we suppose, the tokens of approaching Divinity growing evident, Elihu, most naturally, like a man, and like a wise man, expresses himself with great concern, with the precipitance of anxiety natural at so solemn a juncture, (being fearful lest he should deport himself improperly in the divine presence) *Teach us what we shall say unto him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness: by reason of our ignorance.*

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In the course of his harangue, Elihu had seemed conscious of his abilities. But now, in the presence of God, he becomes convinced of the impertinence of human speculation. *Shall it be told him, says he, that I speak? If a man speak* (i. e. if any one of us presume to speak) *surely he shall be swallowed up.* He adds, *And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; i. e. which is concealed within, or beyond the clouds: but the wind passeth over and cleanseth them:* or, I now perceive the wind gains a passage, and scatters their nitrous qualities. At this instant, it seems, opening from behind the clouds, the full-blazing glory, the manifest token of the divine presence, made its appearance. It is rendered in our bible, *Fair weather cometh out of the north.* The storm was clearing up, and the northern quarter presented an unusual brightness of sky. It should properly be rendered, Gold, or splendour, or a bright luminous glory, *proceedeth out of the north.* Elihu adds, (being conscious that it was the divine presence) *With God is terrible majesty.* The celestial brightness moved onward, and Elihu has only time to finish his argument, with these broken, summary remarks. *Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out. He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear him. He respecteth not any that are wise of heart.* It follows, *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*

These sentiments of Elihu are unquestionably just. The reproof with which the speech of the Lord begins, is not directed to Elihu, but to Job. *The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.* Job's three friends also are reprov'd for their vindication of Providence upon false principles. But Elihu is not censured. His conceptions are natural and sublime. The extent of his knowledge, and the candour of his judgment, are admirable. What renders those

words of his which I have selected the more valuable, is the consideration that they were spoke under a sense of the special presence of the Divinity. He does not speak the low, abject language of superstition, nor does he discover the horrors of a bad heart, upon the approach of the divine glory. But he speaks the language of a great and wise man, whose mind was free and uncorrupt; sensible of the awful distance between the creature and the Creator, but nobly confident in the wisdom and goodness of God; persuaded of the inadequate ability of the human mind to investigate the secrets of omniscience, but yet not distrusting, as fallacious, the divine light in man, which shews him the moral character of his Maker.

It is of singular importance to have a just notion of the Incomprehensibility of God. For the subject may be treated with a design to mislead. And the idea may be carried so far as to be destructive of all religion, subversive of common sense, and discouraging to every endeavour to investigate the wisdom, grandeur, and goodness of the dispensations of Providence to mankind.

The Sceptic, first of all, will misrepresent this doctrine, and affirm, that all the parts of the divine character are incomprehensible: insomuch that man cannot understand what the qualities of justice and goodness mean, when attributed to God. The consequence of which doctrine is, that God may act in direct contrariety to our ideas of justice and goodness, having possibly very different ideas of those qualities; and therefore may be just and good according to his own view of actions, but unjust and malignant in the eye of man. But surely we will not grant, that God is incomprehensible in this sense. We will not say, that the divine Mind can be malignant in the eye of any rational creature. We cannot surely allow, that there may be two opposite sorts of justice,

tice, or two opposite sorts of goodness. What reason have we to distrust the faculties with which God has endued us? What ground have we to suppose, that the Author of nature would mislead us by a false light? We perceive that all the instincts of man and other animals lead on to certain gratifications, in which they are not deceived nor disappointed. Hunger and thirst find an infallible relief in the food which nature has provided. We apply to that food by instinct; and we never find the instinct delusive. If God has not imposed upon our senses by a false instinct, why then shall we imagine that he has imposed upon our understandings, by giving us fallacious perceptions of moral objects? How can we bring ourselves to conceive that the goodness which gains our love and esteem, can be wrong or detestable in the eye of any other rational being; or that any superior spirit, of what order soever, can have a mind which approves and thinks with pleasure of the malignancy which we by our reason condemn and sincerely abhor? We may venture then to pronounce, that our natural perceptions of morality are just. They do not depend upon the enlargement of our knowledge. The most ignorant man upon the face of the earth knows the difference between right and wrong, just and unjust, as well as the most learned and refined. An angel, in like manner, knows more than the most improved person of our species. But the superior knowledge of the angel cannot be supposed to give him different perceptions of moral qualities, or to render that vice amiable in his judgment, which is execrable in the opinion of the man. In short, notwithstanding the infinitely different degrees of knowledge in the various orders of reasonable beings, God, angel, and man must have a like perception of the qualities of right and wrong, just and unjust, generous and ungenerous, kind and malignant. So that we have no reason to doubt, that we suffer under any deception in our ideas of the justice,

tice, the goodness, the gracious disposition of the great God. And thus far, without question, his character is not incomprehensible. If we did not thus far comprehend him, we could neither love, nor hope, nor trust in him; man would not be capable of adoring him; nor could we with any ideas call him friend, or father, or good, or merciful, or provident. The notion of imitating God in his moral perfections would be the vainest of chimæras: we could not ascertain the meaning of his laws, though he should make a publication of them: we should have no faculties to distinguish a true revelation from a false one: and we should worship the one glorious and supreme Cause, with as much horror, darkness, and uncertainty, as the bewildered, superstitious pagans worshipped the numerous and fantastic idols of antiquity. And to bring us to these desirable points, is, it seems, the glory of that stupendous philosophy of doubts, which gains the admiration of the age, distinguished for its penetration, in which we have the honour to be born.

Secondly, the false Theologian, as well as the Sceptic, abuses the doctrine of the divine Incomprehensibility. His faith being full of contradictions, he finds it convenient to bring all enquiries to a precipitate period, by exclaiming that man can have no comprehension of divine matters. But certainly, we can mark, even in divine matters, a difference between things which are purely unaccountable, and things which are absolutely impossible. If not, there would be no end to the absurd and monstrous doctrines, which might be proposed to our faith on an equal footing with such as most easily approve themselves to our reason. The agreement of a doctrine with reason, would then be no ground for admitting it; nor its repugnancy to common sense any sufficient cause for rejecting it. Now, we readily admit the existence of many things which are unaccountable. They may not only be possible, but probable, and even certain; and notwithstanding we are unable to ascertain the
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cause or reason of them, we admit the reality of them without a doubt. But whatever is impossible, can neither be certain, nor probable. There is no ground on which the human understanding can admit it. Nor can any testimony be sufficient to support it. If any one therefore should maintain a proposition concerning God which contradicts itself, and consequently is impossible to be true, it would not be sufficient to urge, by a mean and shallow artifice, that God is incomprehensible; because a proposition which contradicts itself cannot be true of an incomprehensible being, any more than of a comprehensible one. It would not be sufficient, for example, to urge the Incomprehensibility of God, in defence of any such propositions as these: That God can, if he pleases, be both infinite and finite; that he can be man, or an animal; that he can be one person, and five persons; that he can be supreme, and not supreme; that he can send himself from place to place, or be absent from himself, or die and be no-where. These are contradictions; and it is as impossible that they should be true, as that truth and falsehood should be the same. It would argue a strange weakness of mind to assent to such propositions as these, on the ground of their being incomprehensible; because it is evident that if they are not false, nothing can be false, nor can any thing be proved either false or true. Because we do not comprehend the nature of God, it does not follow that we are to believe contradictions of him. We do not comprehend the nature of our own souls, nor the principle of animal motion in our bodies. But I presume we do not think this a sufficient reason for believing contradictions of ourselves. What should we think of the sanity of a man, who should tell us, that because the constitution of our nature is incomprehensible, we are to believe upon that ground that we are a herd of oxen, or an orchard of plumb-trees, or the fallen angels; or that we educated our ancestors of the fourteenth century;

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or that we are at this instant in St. Peter's at Rome, or in the island of Madagascar? And though it will readily be allowed, that we comprehend of ourselves more than we comprehend of God, yet still it will be insisted on, that we can affirm some things as certainly of him, as any thing we can affirm of ourselves. As for instance, you can say of God, that he cannot be you yourself, with as much certainty as you can say of yourself, that you cannot be God. Notwithstanding you know more of yourself than you know of him, the contradiction in either case is equally palpable. And you are full as certain that God cannot be both infinite and finite, as you are of yourself, that whilst you are in this church, you are not at Madagascar.

And now let it be observed, once for all, that the character of incomprehensibility does not belong to contradictions. It belongs to truths, which are probable, or certain, but mysterious on account of our present ignorance of facts or causes connected with them. Let the human knowledge be enlarged, by an acquaintance with facts now unknown, and causes which at present lie concealed, and the mystery of any truth in question will disappear. But no enlargement of knowledge will ever alter the nature of a contradiction. For it is the same faculty of perception by which we know a contradiction to be false, to which we must be indebted for every future discovery. So that if there could be a discovery which proves the truth of a contradiction, it would be subversive of that faculty by which all discoveries are made. An angel may have a familiar comprehension of facts and causes which at present are concealed from man. And consequently, things may be mysteries to man, which need no explication to the angel; and which man himself, in a future state, may investigate with ease. But the knowledge of the highest of all angels,

gels, the immense discoveries of eternity will not make it appear, that the divine Spirit is an animal, that water is fire, or that the number two is equal to six thousand.

It is a strange definition of the nature of God, to say that he is a being, of whom contradictions may be affirmed. It is blasphemy and atheism. For to say that he is a being of whom contradictions may be affirmed, is in effect to say that he is no being at all, or that it is impossible he should exist. When therefore we speak of the incomprehensibility of the divine nature, it is absurd and blasphemous, if we mean to gain credit to impossibilities, which are affirmed concerning it. But it is highly proper, and consistent with sound sense and rational piety, if we mean to inspire a just veneration for that great and wonderful Spirit, who is infinite and everlasting, and transcends the human conceptions when they are loftiest and noblest. It is the infinitude of God which is incomprehensible. But this is certain, and involves no contradiction. It is the eternity of God which is incomprehensible. But this is certain, and involves no contradiction. It is the omniscience and omnipotence of God which are incomprehensible. But these are certain, and involve no contradiction. It is the secret, universal, governing, protecting, providing operation and agency of God throughout the universe, bringing good out of evil, and over-ruling all the parts of nature, material and immaterial, mortal and immortal, mechanical and free, — this it is which is incomprehensible. But this is certain, and involves no contradiction. Why are these things incomprehensible to us, but because we are not infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent; and because we do not support and govern the universe? The redemption of mankind by Jesus the Messiah, is, from the nature of it, a stupendous scheme. The whole connection and extent of it are perhaps yet unrevealed. But it is a work of God,

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which, as far as we know it, we admire, and contemplate with pleasure. There is nothing in the whole scheme which is irreconcilable to our faculties, tho' much which reminds us that we are ignorant and imperfect dependants on wisdom and grace too deep for us to fathom. There is nothing unreasonable in believing that God sent forth his spirit in prophets and apostles, to awaken the attention of mankind to truths, which were necessary for their consolation, and useful for their improvement in virtue; that predictions were delivered, and miracles performed, for these purposes, by the secret energy of the Divinity. Nor is it unreasonable to believe that a world of creatures, apparently perishing and dissolving in the material mass, shall be restored to existence by the same power which first produced them in their present form. We *must* believe that we were created, how much soever we may be astonished at our present existence. And it requires no unnatural exertion of the mind to believe, that we shall be preserved in existence by the power of God in another mode, and take a second turn on the orb of our former appearance, in the day of redemption.

It is not believing any seeming contradiction to embrace that great doctrine of the gospel, that the Son of God sustains the high character of Man's Redeemer; or that in virtue of his obedience and benevolence in a suffering state, he has acquired ability and dignity to preside over the living and the dead; to take the disposal of the future condition of mankind; to distribute immortality to those who are fit to be immortal; to fulfil the second part of the Messiah's most illustrious character (all the suffering scenes being gloriously reversed in the triumphs of his kingdom); to establish the happiness of men upon a total abolishment of every disorder; and to restore, together with human nature, the whole system of this world, and repair the ruins in which at present we behold it. Nor
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yet do we believe any apparently contradictory proposition, when we assent to it, that *God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father*: or, that, having in the gospel claimed us for his children, he hath inspired us with a *spirit of adoption*; a spirit suited to this honourable filiation, in virtue of which we call upon God as the universal parent (*Abba, ὁ Πάτερ*) Father of the Jew, and Father of the Greek.

Let it then be remarked, in justice to the argument which I have endeavoured to illustrate, that it carries no injurious conclusion, respecting the scripture-doctrine concerning God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and that *spirit of holiness*, which along with the gospel went abroad into the world. No one truth can possibly subvert another. And I have no apprehension that any clear deduction of reason can run in opposition to the doctrine of a revelation from the Author of human nature. Nor in fact is there any one doctrine in the gospel, concerning the divine conduct, which appears in the least irrational, or even so much as improbable, considering the attributes of God, and the present condition of mankind. If the writers of the new testament had been aware, that when they speak of the person of our Saviour, the idea had involved any apparent contradiction, they would probably have represented it as a mystery, and made use of explications much more similar than we find them to the jargon of later ages. They do mention other points as mysteries (or secrets, till they were declared) such as the calling of the Gentiles, and the doctrine that *all shall not sleep, but all shall be changed*. The gospel also itself is styled the *great mystery of godliness*: But it is said at the same time to have been *manifested*, and *justified*, and *seen*, and *preached*, and *believed*, and gloriously *received*. Such are the mysteries of the new testament: mysteries explored, and clearly discovered to the enlightened world. But the evangelical writers never represent it as a mystery still above

the reach of our faculties, that God sent his Messiah, and endued him with powers for the instruction and salvation of mankind. The metaphysical nature of our Saviour is no subject of scripture in any part of it, how large a share soever it has engrossed in systems of opinion which are professedly derived from that venerable authority. We may frequently have lent an audience to men, who, after having affirmed as much as they thought proper of the nature of our Saviour, have urged that it is a mystery. But I would fain be informed in what part of the new testament the inspired writers say things apparently contradictory concerning Christ, and then resolve it into a mystery. Christ has no mystery about him in the conception of the evangelists and apostles. The mysteries they treat of are entirely of another species. They are secrets only, secrets formerly, but secrets no longer, since a declaration of them was made. Nor yet do the writers of the new testament imply any unfathomable mystery, in what they say of the *holy spirit*, or the *spirit of God*, or the *spirit of Christ*, or the *spirit of truth*, or the *spirit of adoption*, or the *spirit of holiness*, or the *spirit of love*, or the *spirit of a sound mind*. All this is no mystery in the idea of the evangelical writers. If it had been so, we might have expected to read in the gospels and epistles the same subtle and perplexing sophisms which have been elaborately studied by the artificers of bodies of divinity. From hence then it is clearly to be collected, that the evangelists and apostles were not conscious of any obscurity or mystery in their doctrine concerning our Saviour, and the Spirit; and that nothing could be more remote from their intention than to teach any thing upon the points which would be difficult or inexplicable to the churches. The application therefore of mystery or incomprehensibility to these subjects is fallacious; and evidently calculated for the support of unscriptural definitions of them, not for the support of those simple and rational propositions contained in the gospel, which

which we perceive do not resolve themselves into mystery, to give them an unwarrantable sanction.

The theologian who is wrapped up in false theories, is for ever taking shelter under this expanded canopy of the incomprehensibility of God. He abuses the doctrine still farther, not only to reconcile the mind to the belief of contradictions in the nature of God, but also to support opinions of his will and providence, which are dishonourable to his character. He will not allow, that the ways and dispensations of God are the proper subjects of human investigation. And on this ground he takes the liberty to demand our assent to any wild and prodigious proposition which may suit his caprices. It is high time to deprive absurdity of this convenient retreat, and shew her naked for public scorn. To what end, let us enquire, does the wise God reveal to us any of his designs or proceedings? Is it intended that we should profit, or be instructed by them; that we should perceive their fitness, and admire their wisdom and grandeur? Or is it intended only that we should be shocked and mortified by their apparent unfitness, littleness, and deformity, under peril at the same time for not blindly acquiescing, and acknowledging, contrary to all appearance, that they are truly grand and decorous, and worthy of infinite goodness and wisdom? Now, if it is designed that we should admire, and gain improvement by the revealed schemes of Providence, we may fairly and confidently presume, that they approve themselves to our best understanding; that they are not little, disproportioned, and deformed (how injuriously soever a dark bigot may represent them;) and that their fitness, grandeur, and decorum are the proper and intended subjects of human investigation. No longer therefore let us be over-awed upon every occasion, by the magic sound of mystery, or incomprehensibility, imper-

impertinently and fraudulently introduced to prevent the discovery of divine truth and wisdom, and give sacredness to falshood and folly, which have taken their names, and usurped their thrones. Let us dare to enquire, whether it is worthy of God, first to controul and direct the wills and actions of all men, and then select a few, without any desert, to be the objects of his partial favour, and consign the remainder, without a fault, to everlasting torture. Or shall we acquiesce in this, and say that it is and must be right, because God does it, of whose rectitude we are no judges, because he is incomprehensible? Or shall we embrace it for true scripture-doctrine, that all the untutored nations, who know not the gospel-intelligence, go in flocks to perdition; and that infants which never speak, nor contemplate, but only breathe to weep their hour, pass, for want of an immersion or the mutter of a ceremony, to a place of torment, prepared for every reprobated spirit, matured with years, or but instantly emerged from the embryo? And shall this also be resolved with acquiescence into the incomprehensibility of God and his ways? In short, this licentious misrepresentation of the divine incomprehensibility has been the support of every blasphemous proposition which could well be invented to confound the understanding, and terrify the heart of man. Every dark tenet of Calvinism borrows its sanction from the incomprehensibility of God. Thus the holy and divine nature has been transformed into that of a malignant and capricious dæmon; and, under sanctuary of the incomprehensibility of the Divinity, the Calvinist propounds such a system of faith, as renders it questionable whether the great God, or his adversary the devil, be the most immoral character.

But now, if you please, we will draw to a close, and bid farewell to absurdities which grow too serious to give us pleasure.

Because then the divine being is incomprehensible, it will not follow, either that his moral qualities are unknown to us; or that we cannot with certainty put a negative when impossibilities are affirmed concerning him; or that his dispensations, with regard to their wisdom, grandeur, and goodness, are inexplicable to man. After Elihu has declared, *Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out*, he adds in the positive, *He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. He will not afflict.* i. e. He will not punish, like angry men, for punishment's sake. All this Elihu knew concerning God. And from hence it follows, that an acquaintance may be made with his providential dispensations, which will confirm these worthy and exalted sentiments of his character. Without them we can have no rational principles of religion, nor be comfortable and chearful in the practice of it. Elihu adds, *Men do therefore fear him.* i. e. Knowing God to be possessed of all power and dominion, supreme, unrivalled, and unequalled in the universe, wise and unerring in his judgment, infallible in all his decisions, perfectly just and irreproachable in his treatment of all creatures, and so kind and gracious, so true a well-wisher, and so sure a benefactor to all, that he cannot be inclined even to punish the transgressor with the purpose of giving pain, thus knowing and conceiving of the great God, men learn to *fear* him; to reverence him with a lowly and profound regard, tempered with gratitude and love, and joy and acquiescence under his administration. Let us be anxious to cultivate sentiments worthy of the most glorious and most amiable of beings. Let us be diligent and impartial in the study of his word and providence. Let us be thankful for the light which he has granted us, to guide us to the knowledge of himself. But let us never grow proud of our superiority over men who are less improved, or even over animals which cannot speculate. It is a remark in this excellent book of Job, somewhat humiliating to a
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conceited person, *Vain mán would be reputed wise, tho' man be born like the wild ass's colt.* We made not ourselves to differ from inferior animals. We dwell together in the same habitation, and are compelled to be mutually subservient to each other. Wherein we differ, our pre-eminence is not much to be boasted. The most enlightened of our species discern but a small part of the divine ways. Pride is the greatest obstacle to improvement. And it highly behoves us to improve our faculties, not to glory in any present attainment, or imagined discovery. God *respecteth not any that are wise of heart.* For all human knowledge is ignorance in the sight of God, in an infinitely greater degree than the strength of an insect is weakness in the estimation of mankind.

I trust that no person of a sober mind, who wishes well to the cause of genuine christianity, will have the least inclination to censure the arguments which have been offered, as if they were calculated for the unworthy purpose of unsettling the opinions of men, whose sincerity is greater than their discernment. But are men, because they are sincere, to be uninformed? I incline rather to conceive, that the sincere person who is in error, deserves most of all men to be nourished with the sound knowledge of religion, and guarded against the imposture by which his inward man suffers in a state of famine and of bondage. And from whom is this ingenuous information to be expected, if not from the minister of Christ's religion? What an execrable wretch should I justly be reputed, if I did not feel the weight of this obligation upon my conscience! If christians have been accustomed to hold sacred any human explications of scripture, relating to the divine nature, which amount to contradictions, not very dissimilar to some of those which I have produced for examples, it only proves that it is time to detach the holy scripture from the comments of theologers, and artificers

ficers of a system. The gospel of Christ does not contain any of those subtle distinctions, or unintelligible phrases, in which the pedantry and sophistry of succeeding times have delighted. These distinctions and phrases have only obscured the native simplicity of the truth, embittered the minds of men with the rage of bigotry, and held up to the detestation of the world a perfectly counterfeit christianity. The gospel itself does not shock the Mahometan, or the eastern Sage. But our artificial explications do stagger them exceedingly. The modern improved Jew stumbles not so much at the cross of Christ, as at the appearance of Idolatry in christian worship: which obnoxious appearance will always remain, till the metaphysical and unscriptural jargon is expunged from the formularies which are set out for observation. Even the uninstructed Negro, who is willing to believe almost any thing upon the testimony of one whom he can think to be his friend, starts with horror at the first propositions of a missionary. How large a share of the infidelity which now prevails in our own country, and in every part of Europe, is to be attributed to the unamiable and unsatisfactory light in which the christian scheme is very commonly represented, I will not take upon me to determine: being apprehensive that every thoughtful person who hears the remark, anticipates me in the computation. And we may venture to pronounce, that as long as the christian churches continue to define the doctrines of the gospel, in supplemental and explanatory authorities of their own, abounding with intricacies, contradictions, marks of pedantry, symptoms of bigotry and rashness, and characters of a mean and partial civil policy, altho' the clergy both in popish and protestant countries should be supported and confirmed in their hierarchical powers, to the full extent of the most romantic of their claims, they will not be able, with all the influence which those powers can afford them, to save christianity from being suspected, ridiculed, and despised: England and all Europe will abound with Deists; the Turk will immortalize the

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Koran;

Koran; the Jew will either discover the truth of the gospel without being indebted to the Christian, or still reject it with a firmness which has astonished many centuries; the Negro will consider it as an engine of the white man's artifice; and the humane and contemplative naturalist in the remotest corner of the East, will bless his sun and stars, that his mind was never distracted, nor his passions inflamed, by the jargon and confusion of the creeds of Christendom.



L E C T U R E II.

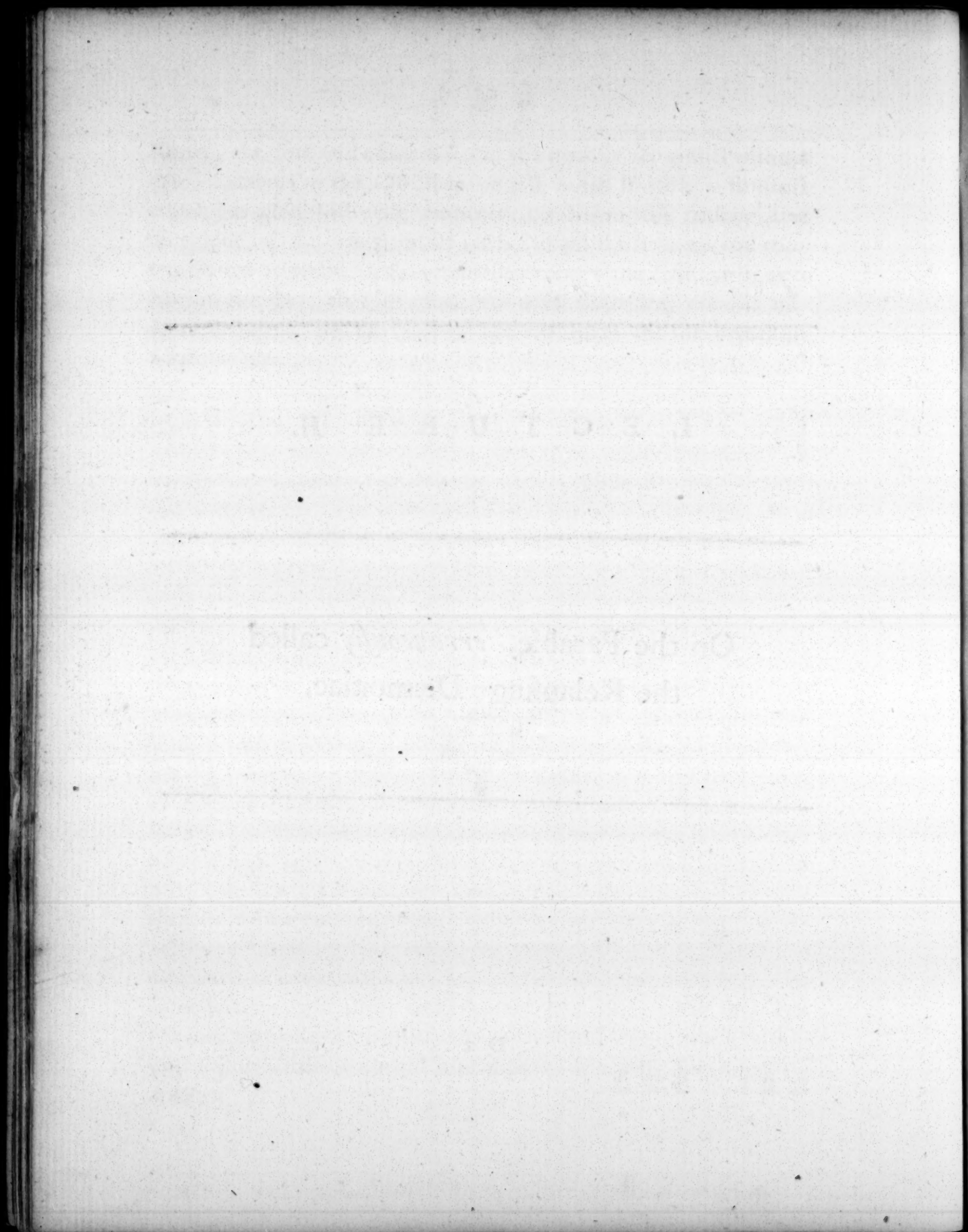
On the Parable, *erroneously* called
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the Relapsing Dæmoniac.



M A T T H. XII. 43, 44, 45.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh thro' dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first.

IT is not easy to conceive any thing more wild and romantic than the sense of commentators upon this parable. Not that I should think it an object of any material consequence to expose their sense of it, if it was not for the sake of restoring (what under their interpretation lies buried out of sight) one of the finest and most instructive moral pictures in the world.

By the *unclean spirit*, they understand some real and substantial being, a spiritual and invifible wicked agent, which comes in and goes out of the human mind at discretion, as a man goes into his house, or walks out of it abroad. They suppose that when this spirit thinks proper to quit his residence in the human mansion, or is forcibly dispossessed, he ranges at large thro' dry deserts and wild uncultivated places, in search of some quiet retreat; that, not finding such a retreat to his mind, he comes to a resolution to go back to his lodgings: which he finds in a much cleaner and handsomer condition than he left them. But here the commentators are divided. For it is not agreed upon whether the travelling spirit is pleased with these circumstances or not. Some are of opinion that he likes them exceedingly, and from this motive wishes to entertain company, and seeks for seven other and more wicked dæmons to cohabit with him. According to this class of interpreters, *sweeping* and *garnishing* denote the poor man's relapse into his old vicious indulgencies, which

which makes an agreeable reception for the devil at his return. But others think, that finding his house clean-swept and *garnished*, the dæmon is disgusted and disappointed; so that *sweeping* and *garnishing*, according to this glossary, signify such a degree of purity in the present state of the man's mind, as causes the evil spirit to despair lest he should not be able to enter in again without a confederacy of seven more potent than himself. From one motive, however, or from the other, he engages the seven, and, together with them, re-enters the man, corrupts him beyond recovery, and seals him for damnation.

But besides the romantic air of this interpretation, there are reasons of a more serious nature, which forbid us thus to construe the parable in question. For doctrines might be drawn from it, which are shocking to reason, and discouraging to virtue. First of all, it would justify an opinion, that the faculties and powers of the human mind lie continually at the mercy of evil spirits. A doctrine so full of horror and despair, that it is marvellous how any man who believes it can either wish for his own part to continue in existence, or prevail upon himself to be instrumental in conveying it to his offspring. From hence also it would follow, that God is displeased with men for actions which in reality are to be attributed to some other wicked agent or agents who actuated and possessed them. If this doctrine was true, it would be unreasonable either in God or man to be angry with the wicked, or to treat them as criminals with any sort of punishment. All the desperate actions of the most inhuman murderer must be resolved into his absolute passiveness, under the *fiat* of some malignant dæmon, or perhaps seven or eight dæmons, who make use of him as a settled abode, or an occasional house of call in the course of their migrations. Again, it would follow from this interpretation, that the sincerest penitent is as liable to be repossessed by the devil, and reduced under his dominion, as the most voluntary slave to his vices.

For, according to this interpretation, the evil spirit can say, provided he does not like the dry and desert places, *I will return to my house whence I came out.* And not only so, but he can take along with him *seven more, and worse than himself,* and fill all the apartments of the human faculties with fiends and furies from hell.

It is high time then to enquire, whether this parable of our Saviour will not afford us a more instructive moral, as well as a more rational entertainment.

But first of all, it will not be improper to point out a few difficulties which attend the foregoing explication, not very easy to be surmounted by a critical reader.

First then, if we acquiesce in the interpretation which has been given, as the true sense of the parable, it will be difficult to conceive how Christ could mean it for a just representation of the state of the Jewish people in his time. For as soon as he has finished his picture of the unhappy man, whose *last state is worse than his first,* he adds, *Even so shall it be also to this wicked generation.* How greatly then was that generation to be pitied, being totally passive in its own ruin, and hurried on by infernal powers to extreme guilt and perdition! Why then does our Saviour, just before the parable, censure that generation as *evil and adulterous*? Or why does he say, that *the men of Nineveh, and the queen of the South, shall rise up in judgment against it, and condemn it*?

Secondly, if we admit this construction of the parable, it may perplex us to account for the conduct of the *unclean spirit* in roving to the deserts, when he was in quest of another habitation, i. e. another man, in whom he might take up his abode. So Grotius understands the word *ἀνταύριον*; i. e. says he, (*habitandi locum*) a
place

place to dwell in. The word indeed simply imports *Rest*: but *Rest*, however, supposes a *Place* where rest may be enjoyed. And Grotius put this construction upon it, because he understood the spirit to be in want of a man (by way of house) to reside in. Now, deserts and unfrequented places seem very unlikely for the range of an *unclean spirit*, when in quest of a human being. The cities, palaces, markets, theatres, and temples, might rather obtain a visit from the dæmon upon this occasion. And tho' it was a common notion among the Jews, that evil spirits had their haunts in deserts and desolate places, it does not follow that Jesus was of that opinion. The vulgar of the present age are much in the same way of thinking, and believe that goblins and apparitions abound in woods, wildernesses, and church-yards. But it cannot be concluded from hence, that any enlightened and judicious man of the age has any such apprehension. This difficulty seems to have forced Grotius himself to adopt so childish an opinion. That he might account for the *unclean spirit's* betaking himself to the deserts in quest of a man, he urges that there are evil dæmons in all places unfrequented by mankind, that what man soever gets into solitude may become capable of vice. (*Talia autem sunt dæmoni loca omnia extra hominem, ut qui solus vitii sit capax.*) But here arises a greater difficulty still; because the more such dæmons abound in solitary haunts, the less likely is the evil spirit in question to find in those haunts a subject for himself to defile.

Grotius refers us to two passages as parallel to this parable, which one would think might easily have extricated that great man from the difficulties of so gross an explication. The first of those passages is John v. 14. where Christ, finding a man whom he had cured of an infirmity of long standing, admonishes him thus. *Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* Certainly this case (supposing the man to have sinned again)

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is exceedingly different from that of a wretch whom the devil forsakes, and then revisits at his pleasure. The other passage is 2 Peter ii. 20. *If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, thro' the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.* This is sound sense, and rational divinity. Their escaping the pollutions of the world is by no means parallel to being deserted for a season by a capricious dæmon; nor is their future entanglement in those pollutions equal in any degree to the being repossessed by the same dæmon as soon as the desarts disgust him.

The incomparable Grotius is seldom so unfortunate as in his criticisms upon this place. Upon the number of *seven* dæmons here mentioned, he makes this observation. Whatever, says he, arrives at its full measure, or perfection in its kind, is signified by this number. (*Quicquid in suo genere ad plenam mensuram pervenit hoc numero significatur.*) According to this position, seven dæmons are the full measure of a dæmoniac. And indeed one would think seven to be a very sufficient groupe. If Grotius, however, had counted right, he would have found *eight*: the *unclean spirit* itself being *one* (according to this interpretation) added to the *seven* whom he persuades to lodge with him. What a cabal, what a combination is here of indwelling dæmons of enormous qualities and powers, enclosed in the person of one puny and diminutive mortal!

And now I have no doubt it will appear, that our Saviour's parable contains a most just, lively, natural, and instructive representation of a relapsing Penitent (not a relapsing Dæmoniac); and that instead of referring to any Route of an evil Dæmon in the desarts, he means to describe the Pilgrimage of a Penitent, when he first forsakes his favourite vices, and finds the beginning of his journey to be rugged and fatiguing.

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By the phrase, the *unclean spirit*, Jesus plainly refers to a former part of the conversation (v. 27.) when the subject turned upon his *casting out* what the Jews called *devils*, or *dæmons*, or *evil*, or *unclean spirits*. Terms, which they seem to have appropriated to signify the malignant, invisible Cause of any extreme disease which they were unable to account for. Whether it was melancholy, or frenzy, or epilepsy, or what not, provided the malady arose to a degree above the skill of the physician to account for, remove, or alleviate, it was attributed to an *evil spirit* : i. e. some malignant, undiscoverable Cause. Now, in this parable, our Saviour applies the same phrase to the inward Cause of a *moral* distemper : where the mind of a man receives a cure from vice, but afterwards relapses into the same disease, with more aggravated symptoms.

Nor is there the least impropriety in this application of the phrase. For an *unclean spirit* may be said to dwell in a man so long as he is wicked, when nothing more is meant than that he harbours within him an immoral disposition, which is the secret, invisible, hidden Cause of his criminal actions. And in like manner, the *unclean spirit* may be said to *go out of him*, when he alters his mind, and performs actions which are just and beneficent. For these just and beneficent actions are resolvable into a new and different Cause : and we conclude that the Cause which produced his *criminal* actions, operates no longer, but is extinct, or over-powered, or removed away. It is not therefore implied that any real, distinct, intelligent, wicked spirit has withdrawn from his cabinet in the soul of a reformed person, but only that such person acts from a new and better principle. And now let it be observed, that the scripture, in other places, speaks of the *Heart*, as the inward Cause of human actions. An *evil heart* is said to produce *evil actions*, as a *corrupt tree* is productive of *corrupt fruit*. An *evil heart* then, and an *unclean spirit*, are phrases of the same import precisely. We are exhorted to *take heed lest there be in us an evil heart of unbelief*. We

understand from hence that it is our duty to be cautious lest we give entertainment to such a *heart*. But no man supposes that *hearts of unbelief* literally go about, and wait for admission into the breasts of men. Thus we read moreover of a *clean heart*, and a *pure heart* : the opposite to which is an *unclean heart*, or (which is the same thing) an *unclean spirit*. The scripture also speaks of God's taking away from wicked men their *hearts of stone*, and giving them *hearts of flesh* : by which it is plainly meant, that by the dispensations of his providence he meliorates and improves them. But no man conceives, upon the ground of these expressions, that the obdurate hearts of wicked men are literally taken out and thrown away, and replaced with others of gentler qualities. When therefore it is said, that the *unclean spirit is gone out of a man*, the same thing is meant as if it had been said, the evil *heart* is gone out of him, or the *heart of stone* is taken away from him. Is it not strange that so slight a variation in the phrase should give existence to a licentious and powerful dæmon, and transform the human person into a convenient range of apartments for him and his associates ?

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man,—i. e. when a man, in consequence of some rational and persuasive address to his understanding, or some alarming dispensation of providence which rouses his faculties, and awakens his fears, or his tender affections, becomes sensible of his guilt and his danger, forms a present resolution to forsake his vices, and applies himself to the practice of virtue and obedience to the law of God, *he walketh through dry places*. Who walks thro' dry places ? the *unclean spirit* ? No. The *man*, in the outset of his repentance, *walks thro' dry places*. Here the commentators take the devious path. They leave the man, the reality ; and follow the foul spirit, the phantom, thro' wilds, and deserts, and *terra incognita*. Let us then follow the *man*. For we shall more easily trace him of the two. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh thro' dry places*. For the present,

his passions, heretofore engaged in favour of his vices, cease to plead in their behalf. They do not disturb him in his calm and thoughtful employment. They do not urge the attractions of sensual pleasure, nor so much as whisper that vice, compared to virtue, can boast a single charm entitling her to rivalry. The recent awful event which has alarmed him, or the late important discovery which has given a turn to his mind, engrosses his attention, and works upon all the feelings of his nature. Nay, so totally is the *unclean spirit gone out of him*, that he is armed with passion, as well as fortified with reason, to bid defiance with success, as he thinks, to the next assault of temptation. During this start of nature, the penitent is warm and sincere; has no suspicion that his old habits will re-assume their dominion; believes that his present impressions are so deep that no time can efface them; and is apt to conclude nothing so unnecessary as a strict vigilance over himself, or an anxious distrust of the permanency of his resolutions. While he trusts to himself, the mechanism of nature works on as usual. New spirits are set afloat, which do not retain the impression that was made upon old ones. And for want of an express, repeated act of power in the mind, to preserve and perpetuate such impression, the over-balance of power is presently thrown into the very same tendencies which had been accustomed to govern. Here begins the conflict of the unexperienced penitent. A conflict, unexpected, and unprepared for. But every better principle must not at once be counteracted. Some weight must be allowed to vows and resolutions, recently made and ratified. And yet self-denial is harsh and laborious; and it seems too much to forego gratifications whilst they are within reach, and all the impulses of nature press eagerly for indulgence. Here then you see the unhappy man, *walking thro' dry places; seeking a resting-place, but finding none*. Now, if a man, in the beginning of his endeavours to reform, is happily prepared, and provided with a prudent distrust of himself, and a conviction of the necessity of peculiar, fixed attention to every fresh occurrence,

occurrence, enquiring what is its tendency, and how he ought to treat it, considering the greatness of his escape from vice and destruction, he may, by the help of God, stand fast, and obtain by degrees the conquest of himself. And tho' for a time he gathers but scanty satisfactions in the road of virtue, he will find them increasing with his progress; and he will proceed on from *walking* with fatigue in *dry* and barren *places*, to a swift advance in a fertile and well-watered soil: which the scripture calls *running the ways of God's commandments*, with a chearful agility and vigour. Not so the poor unsteady penitent, described in Christ's parable before us. He treads with an indolent and unwilling pace over the desert of self-denial: which he pronounces *dry*, inhospitable, and void of every refreshment. Like the sordid Israelites, when they looked back with a longing eye to the flesh-pots of Ægypt, he thinks too affectionately of the home which he left when he set out upon his pilgrimage. All the comforts, conveniencies, and pleasures of that home, appear now with double advantage to his imagination. The delights and attractions of his house are heightened by the striking contrast of the hardships and horrors of the savage wilds before him. The longer he dwells on the comparison, the feebler and softer is his mind, less and less equal to the difficulties of a pilgrim, till it sinks into the pleasing desire of indulging once more in the effeminacy of domestic repose. A fatal suspense ensues; and his feet halt, never to advance farther in the path to honour. He repents now, with the true *sorrow of the world*, that he ever turned his back upon the tents of sin. In short, he complains with the bitterness (but not with the innocence) of the driver Hassan, in the eclogue of Collins.

Sad was the hour, and luckless was the day,

When first from Schiraz' walls I bent my way.

The desire to revisit his habitation, (if it be only for a transient abode,) grows too strong to be resisted. He indulges the thought till he makes an obstinate resolve, *I will return to my house whence I came out.*

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And here let us pause for a moment, just to remark the propriety of this representation, so far as we have gone, which our Saviour gives of such a character. His leaving his house is the most natural parabolical description in the world, of a person who begins to fulfil a determination to forsake his vices. It is like leaving home with all its attractions, and wandering abroad in a state of pilgrimage. The next circumstance is this: He finds the deserts *dry* and dreary, no hospitable door, no retreat, shelter, or pillow of repose in all the savage prospect around him. As for the satisfactions of virtue, they are far distant before him. And it is after many a weary step he must arrive at the lawns and rivers of tranquillity. But no. He feels in the mean time the scorching heat of the sand, and of the sun. The damps of the night offend the delicacy of his frame. The storms affright him, the precipices astonish him, and the dens of wild beasts persuade him to a precipitate retreat. *I will return to my house*, says he, *whence I came out.*

It follows, *and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished: i. e.* It appears with fresh beauties in his eye. Home always appears more than commonly delightful to a traveller who has had enough of novelties. It is then emphatically Home. This is proverbially true. But the character in the parable is more than satiated with novelties. He is returned, after a series of terrors, mortifications, and fatigues. His heart rejoices when he feels himself once more at ease in an abode which often has refreshed him. See him now in his well-accommodated house, indulging at large the joy of a foolish and unstable heart. Alas! says he, What romantic enthusiasm, or what absurd melancholy possessed me, that I must ramble abroad in quest of an imaginary good, and relinquish these substantial realities, which my senses can testify are worth all the boasted treasures of the mind. Welcome once more to my sight these friendly walls, where plenty and
delight

delight shall often regale me. I resign the barren and inclement desert to virtue and her votaries.

The worst of all is behind. The moment of serious thought will come round in succession to every man. But he who has once engaged himself to God and virtue, will have an awful account to settle with himself. And it will not be in his power at all times to wave the business. It is true, he has arrived at his former seat. He sought it with a hasty step, and re-entered his gate with the cowardly pleasure which arose from a feeling of security from evils attendant upon virtue. Capable however of reflection, his happiness, after so base a retreat, cannot possibly be lasting, cannot possibly be free from interruption. Conscious guilt invades his rest, and menaces in his dream. Shall he again repent, resume once more the staff of the pilgrim, and revisit the caverns, the precipices, and the sands, now more dreadful than before in the sight of one who is deeper sunk in the effeminacy of sin? Rather he will apply to the arts which harden the conscience, divert reflection, and brutalize the soul. What will music, what will revelry and beauty, noise, company, and intemperance, what will the wrangling and sophistry of scepticism effect? If there be *balm in Gilead*, he will purchase it. He flies to dissipation, changes the scene from riot to riot, from mirth to disputation, and from the harlot to the banquet and the bowl. His guests are numerous, and his entertainments splendid. The *voice of singing men*, and the *voice of singing women* support the elevated chorus. In one word, (for our Saviour has expressed it with a force and elegance which no criticism can heighten,) he taketh into his house *seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they enter in and dwell there.* If you ask, why our Saviour calls them *spirits*, if he only meant such wicked persons as this relapsed penitent chooses for his companions? I answer, that altho' this is not the general denomination of mankind, either in scripture or elsewhere, yet these

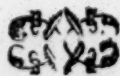
these persons in the parable, being seducers to vice, and corruptors of principle, are emphatically called *spirits*, in allusion to the fabulous infernals. When St. Paul speaks of persons of this flagitious character, he uses the very same language, and calls them *seducing spirits*, and *devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron*. Such as these are the persons, who are precisely calculated to finish the work of corruption in the unhappy character before us. They are well-skilled in the Syren-songs of voluptuous atheism; and can drown the remonstrances of his conscience, by the liquid harmony of their notes. These are the associates of his choice, his domestic, perpetual companions. With them he passes the revolving seasons. Land, air, and water are ransacked for the delicacies of their table. Commerce pays to it a daily tribute out of her imported luxuries. *The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts*. Youth, beauty, and brilliance are the glory of their midnight assemblies. They fill themselves, like the infidels in the book of Wisdom, *with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by them*. They crown themselves with rose-buds before they are withered, and leave tokens of their joyfulness in every place.

The parable concludes with informing us, that *the last state of this man is worse than the first*. But this requires no proof, nor illustration.

I know of nothing that remains to be illustrated on this parable, unless it be the application which Christ makes of it to that Generation of the Jews. Nor can any thing be more easy and natural, according to the view which I have given of it. First of all, the Jews in general were ready to embrace their Messiah, and resembled a man when the *unclean spirit is gone out of him*. By and by they discover Jesus to be a different character from that which they had drawn in their expectations of the Messiah:

Messiah: No political legislator, no monarch of state, no victorious commander in the field; but an instructor in virtue and heavenly things, opposing himself to the prevailing vices of the age, and exciting against himself and his followers, the vengeance of the church and state. Here the Jews find themselves in *dry places*, and determine to retreat. They enjoy with double delight the vices from which Jesus had called them. They join themselves to the infernal combinations of the chief Priests and Pharisees; and become subservient to the darkest of their designs. To their tuition they resign themselves; by their instigation they vote Jesus to the Cross; and under their guidance they grow callous and abandoned till their recovery is impracticable.

Such is this excellent parable. I appeal to you if it is not highly finished, and worthy in all respects of our heavenly Instructor. Go then, and profit by the lively representation it affords you. You cannot but see reason why you should separate from vice, altho' it be as dear to you as a home in which you have long dwelt and enjoyed innumerable pleasures. Go forth with a brave determination to proceed. Let not the ruggedness of your first prospects intimidate your mind, or produce one effeminate longing to revisit the habitation, which duty has called you to forsake. For should you be prevailed on to step once more over the fatal threshold, you will probably find the apartments so *swept* and *garnished*, that you will be enticed to make a final abode in them. And it will not be in my power or your own, to ascertain how strongly you will be tempted to apply to every auxiliary at hand, to confirm and establish you in vice, and harden your heart beyond the hope of amendment.



Method: The general method of the present study is to select a group of subjects, to give them a certain amount of instruction, and to observe the results. The subjects are selected from the general population, and are given a certain amount of instruction in the use of the instrument. The results are then observed, and are compared with the results of a control group. The results are then compared with the results of a control group. The results are then compared with the results of a control group.

It is the object of this study to determine the effect of the use of the instrument on the results of the study. The subjects are selected from the general population, and are given a certain amount of instruction in the use of the instrument. The results are then observed, and are compared with the results of a control group. The results are then compared with the results of a control group. The results are then compared with the results of a control group.

The results of the study are as follows: The subjects who were given the instruction in the use of the instrument showed a significant improvement in the results of the study compared to the control group. The results of the study are as follows: The subjects who were given the instruction in the use of the instrument showed a significant improvement in the results of the study compared to the control group.

L E C T U R E III.

On the Evangelical Spirit.

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JOHN VII. 37, 38, 39.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For the holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

WHATEVER be the precise idea of what is called in the new testament the *Spirit*, or the *holy Spirit* (with various other epithets which accompany it) it pervades the evangelical writings from beginning to end, and connects itself with every fact and doctrine they contain. And therefore by interpreting these phrases judiciously or injudiciously, we may throw the christian revelation into darkness and confusion, or else exhibit it in such a luminous and consistent view as will discover new charms in it, and new marks of its heavenly original.

In speaking to this point, I shall take the liberty of disusing the word *Ghost*, as a term by no means proper to express the Greek word Πνεῦμα, but answering to Φάντασμα, a spectre, or apparition. Yet this wanton rendering of the word Πνεῦμα has obtained in our translation, in all the passages where the epithet το ἅγιον, *holy*, is annexed to it. And this has given birth to such romantic and fanciful images of this Spirit in the minds of common readers as are extremely prejudicial to their acquiring a sober and rational apprehension of it. Now, supposing for a moment, that the Spirit means the secret Principle of the divine agency, operating either in miraculous powers, or moral and intellectual endowments, I would ask for a reason why the epithet *holy* may not be applied to it?

it? or whether the Spirit of a divine agency can be otherwise than holy? and therefore by what law of construction the epithet *holy* must necessarily create the idea of a Spectre? There is the same reason for the preference of the word *Ghost* to that of *Spirit*, in all the other passages where Πνεῦμα is to be met with. Let us try the effect of it in a few of them. The Ghost of *truth*, the Ghost of *Christ*, the Ghost of *God*, the Ghost of *adoption*, and the Ghost of a *sound mind*. Or what sort of sense shall we make of the places where τὸ Πνεῦμα, *the Spirit* emphatically, is mentioned without any epithet or character at all? *This spake he of the Ghost which they that believe on him should receive. God giveth not the Ghost by measure unto Christ. The wisdom and the Ghost by which Stephen spake. And St. John was in the Ghost, and carried away in the Ghost.*

The word *Spirit*, in its genuine and precise signification, denotes any active, hidden Principle, or secret, efficacious Cause. Wherever the effect is resolvable into some concealed, undiscernible Spring of action, there the word *Spirit* is properly applicable, and denotes that concealed, undiscernible Spring. On this account it is applied to signify the *soul* of man, the *passions*, the *vivacity*, the *courage*, and the *character* of a person. Consistently with this idea the same word is applied to denote Angels, as immaterial beings, superior to man, whose mode of existence we cannot account for or explain. They are *Spirits*; i. e. their Essence is too subtle for our comprehension: their nature and properties are concealed from us. According to the same rule this word is applied also to God, and imports either God *himself*, as he is the invisible Cause of nature; or his invisible, active, producing *energy*; or a *quality* in him, as for instance, his *free Spirit* mentioned in the Psalms, i. e. his liberal or bountiful disposition, which is the invisible Cause, producing good to the creation.

In the same view, moreover, we perceive the propriety of the application of this word to things inanimate. Thus the Wind, or Principle of motion in the air, is called in the new testament Πνεῦμα, Spirit. And we know very well what is meant by the Spirit of the *world*, the Spirit of *error*, the Spirit of *bondage*, the Spirit of *law*, and the Spirit of *trade* : i. e. the secret Cause which makes the world, error, bondage, law, trade, operate to produce among men their respective, characteristic effects. Now, the *Spirit*, and the *holy Spirit*, in the new testament, denote the secret Principle of divine agency, which exerts itself either in *mechanical*, or else in *moral* and *intellectual* operations. Of the first kind is that *holy Spirit* or *Principle* of divine agency, which is said to have *overshadowed* the virgin-mother of Jesus. And Jesus is said to have been *led by* this Spirit *into the wilderness* : i. e. conducted thither in the divine *afflatus* ; under the influence of which he had such visions and mental representations as required a suspension of the bodily senses. The agency which produced it was *mechanical* in its operation. A similar transportation in the divine *afflatus* is meant by Philip's being removed by the *Spirit of the Lord* from Gaza, where he had been in vision, to Azotus, where he was in reality. And the same *Principle* of divine agency in *mechanical* operations is meant by the *Spirit*, to which the miraculous gifts and endowments are attributed, which are called the *gifts* and *powers* of the *Spirit*. This was the *holy Spirit*, or Principle of miraculous agency, of which the disciples at Ephesus are said not to have *heard* even the least intelligence. And thus we are to understand what is meant by the *Spirit*, when it is said *not to suffer* Paul and Timothy to go into Bithynia, and in another instance to order Peter to go with the messengers of Cornelius, *nothing doubting*. i. e. such orders and prohibitions were given to the apostles in divine visions, under the *afflatus*, a *mechanical* operation of the divine agency. On the other hand, the *holy Spirit*, or secret Principle of divine agency, which discovers it-
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self in *moral* and *intellectual* operations, and forms a Spring of right sentiment and action in the *minds* and *hearts* of men, is properly the *evangelical* Spirit: or that Spirit *from* God, which is diffused by his revelation in the gospel. *He that believeth on me,* says our Saviour, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* Not only shall his own thirst be satisfied with the most essential knowledge and the happiest endowments of a rational being; but the *Spirit* which he shall have imbibed shall be like a Spring of living water to all around him, contributing to the improvement and happiness of mankind by the ingenuous communication of his evangelical attainments. *This,* says St. John, *spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive. For the holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*

It is by no means difficult to distinguish which of the two Principles of the divine agency is to be understood in any part of the new testament. It may be determined by this rule. When the operation is *mechanical*, persons are said to be *led*, or *carried*, or *driven* by the Spirit; or the effects of it are described as external and preternatural. In this sense it is never said to be *in* men, in their *minds*, or in their *hearts*, or to have any moral or intellectual consequences attending it, excepting such endowments of the intellectual sort as are not attainable by the ordinary use of the human faculties without a preternatural illumination: as the gift of *tongues*, and the gift of *discerning spirits*. The *evangelical* Spirit, on the contrary, has no mechanical or preternatural agency at all, but influences the mind conformably to its ordinary mode of receiving impressions, producing virtuous dispositions, and requires only the light or intelligence of the gospel for the ground of its operations. In the case of the mechanical *afflatus*, men are said to be *in the Spirit*. In the case of the *evangelical* Spirit, it is said to be *in Them*. Thus, the disciples *were filled with joy, and with the holy, or evangelical Spirit.*

Spirit. And the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy, or evangelical Spirit which is given unto us. And we have not received the Spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption; not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; and not received the Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

I shall only farther premise, that the Spirit in each of the senses, considered as a Principle of agency, is said accordingly to operate as a Person. Thus it is said of the evangelical Spirit, when he, *the Spirit of truth is come*, (ἐκεῖνος) he shall guide you into all truth; and of the Principle of divine agency in the miraculous gifts, that he divideth to every man severally as he will. In like manner, when God intends to reform the wicked disposition of a people, it is described as a banished Person travelling out of the country. *I will cause the unclean Spirit to pass out of the land.* And the Wind (another Πνεῦμα) being an imperceptible Principle of motion in the air, is described also as a Person, and said to blow wherever it listeth.

On the evangelical Spirit it will be most profitable for us to dwell. And the various scriptural representations of it are what I mean to propose to your favourable attention. It is called, first of all, the Spirit emphatically; the Spirit of truth, the Comforter; the Spirit of God; the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit of wisdom and revelation; the Spirit of prophecy; the Spirit of promise; the Spirit of life; the Spirit of grace; the eternal Spirit; the holy Spirit, or Spirit of holiness; the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; and lastly, the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry *Abba, Father*. Such are the various denominations of the evangelical Spirit. A subject, which, if I am not greatly mistaken, we may investigate with singular pleasure, facility, and advantage. But let us not take with us for a key any system of subtle and metaphysical distinctions.

distinctions. In that case, an Indian or a Hottentot, who never before saw the new testament, would, in my conception, have a superior chance of arriving at the truth. For great numbers of christians, and many learned men, led astray by the false lights of dark and pedantic ages, have been as wild and as far from truth in their opinions upon this point, as the nature of the subject and the compass of human imagination could well allow them. According to some interpreters, this Spirit is God himself, the supreme paternal Deity, in his own person. Others say, that it is not the Person, but the *Power* of God. A third species hold it to be a subordinate agent, or some angel of eminence without a name. Others, leaving all the rest of the representations to shift for themselves, explain the *Spirit of truth the Comforter* to be no other than St. Paul. And after this one would almost wonder that nobody has supposed it to be Constantine the Great. Mahomet, it seems, expounded it of a Prophet whom Jesus predicted as his successor and supplemental teacher, and had the hardihood accordingly to arrogate the character to himself.

With regard to the delay of the effusion of the evangelical *Spirit* till after his death, Christ differs from all other instructors that ever taught any thing to the world. Moses, Pythagoras, Socrates, Zoroaster, Confucius, and all other illustrious teachers in general, communicated to their disciples the fulness of their discoveries before their deaths. Their respective disciples imbibed, while their teachers were living and speaking to them, the Spirit of their doctrine. And after their deaths they had nothing farther to learn from them. All they could do was to contemplate their manners, and treasure up their sayings; and by those exercises of memory to cherish and perpetuate the Spirit which they had already imbibed. The disciples of Jesus, on the contrary, never comprehended the grandest and most material of the doctrines of their master, during all the time they enjoyed his conversation. They had the most
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violent prejudices to blind them ; and his presence (how extraordinary soever it may seem) contributed above all things to fasten those prejudices, and to render his instructions to the contrary, for the present, of no effect. *The holy Spirit was not yet given to the disciples, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* This circumstance, so long as it was postponed, was wanting to derive upon them the fulness of their information. And tho' they were very frequently informed of it by Jesus, as an event which they might with certainty expect, they were so totally absorbed in very different expectations, in which they conceived themselves to be more substantially interested, that they cherished the pleasing delusion, in defiance of a better light. Many of his instructions, it is true, they understood and digested ; and they esteemed and adhered to him as the undoubted Messiah. But they neither relished nor believed the principal points, relating to his death, his subsequent glory to which he was to pass by that melancholy avenue, and the future, distant period of his kingdom. The Spirit by which they were to be inspired, was to result from these momentous discoveries : of which, during the abode of their master upon earth, it seems they were utterly incapable. They could not have admitted the certainty of these points, without rejecting him as Messiah : because they connected the very reverse of them with all their ideas of that character. On this account we find Jesus assuring them, that it was *expedient for them that he should go away* from them ; because, says he, *if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you : but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* This shews, then, that the *holy Spirit* could not have been *given* to the disciples, before Jesus was *glorified* in a superior state. They could not entertain the full Spirit of the gospel, till they were introduced to the most important branches of its intelligence. And in proportion as their present mistakes were gloomy, and rendered their minds unsettled and discomposed, they could not for the present receive a *Comforter*.

While Jesus continued with them, they expected and believed that he would one day burst forth and astonish the world with the external splendour and power of an earthly sovereign sent by God to command and conquer. Nothing but his death and total removal from them could root this notion out of their minds. Nor could they have an idea of his future superior kingdom, so long as there appeared a possibility of his displaying the signs of royalty in the present scenes. During his life therefore, the *Spirit of truth* (properly so called) was necessarily postponed. For this, which now animated them, was a Spirit of *error*.

The propriety of this language will appear from a view of the fact. I mean the reception of the Spirit by the apostles. Against the doctrine of the death of Jesus they had always militated, because they fancied, with their countrymen, that the Messiah was incapable of mortality. His death, then, was an event which frustrated all their schemes, and disappointed them in every hope. No sooner was he laid low in the earth, than they concluded him not to be the Messiah; as appears from the declaration of two of them, that they *trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel*. When they were convinced that he was risen from the dead, their pleasing delusion returned; and they fondly questioned him, even at the last interview they had with him upon earth, *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* But when he had left them for good, and had *endued them with power from on high*, they saw plainly and instantly that his kingdom appertained to a *future* state and sublimer establishment of things; they received the *Spirit of truth*; their errors vanished like phantoms with the shades of night; they recollected the repeated instructions of their master, and were *guided into all the truth* concerning those prophetic descriptions of the Messiah's two states, the distressed and the victorious, to which he had often directed their
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attention. This was their *Comforter* : which the *world*, as Christ told them, *could not receive* : i. e. the Jewish nation could not receive it, because they were incorrigibly governed by expectations of a present earthly kingdom, in which they dreamt of temporalities and every gratification of avarice and ambition. The honest disciples were glad to relinquish these vain and chimerical expectations for the noble prospects of that future establishment which the prophets describe as the triumphant, royal state of the Messiah, and the completion of the great plan of providence and redemption : when the disorders of nature shall be healed, and the ruins of creation repaired ; when the valleys shall be exalted, and the mountains levelled ; when *the wolf shall dwell with the lamb*, and the *lion shall eat straw like the ox* ; when *instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree*, and *instead of the brier the myrtle* ; when *the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad*, and *the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose*. Convinced that Jesus was risen to a superior state, from whence he should return at the consummation for the accomplishment of these glorious purposes, the apostles went forth, and asserted his royalty and dominion over the *future* state of mankind. This became their grand and ever-pleasing theme of argument. It was this which inspired them with the true evangelical *Spirit* ; by this they inspired the world ; and *out of their bellies* (to use the words of my text) *flowed rivers of living water* for the refreshment of human nature. Under the influence of this *Spirit of truth*, they exhorted every man from pursuits of the present world, and referred all for their happiness and true glory to a *resurrection* from death, and a second turn upon this orb : which, tho' now defaced and shattered, and condemned, like its inhabitants, to a temporal destruction, shall be renewed and purified as a proper seat for the residence of its Restorer. Nor did the *Spirit of truth* in the apostles *speak of itself* : (to *speak of itself* is the quality of the Spirit of error) it took from Christ, de-

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duced its intelligence from his authority, and *shewed it unto them*. And it *shewed them things to come*: not things *present* (as the Spirit of error did) but things in a *future* state of existence.

Now, from what other origin could this *Spirit* proceed than from the *Father* of all *light* and illumination, from whom *descendeth every good and perfect gift*? Who but the Author of nature can discover to his creatures his intentions of restoring them from death to another life, and inspire them in consequence with a Spirit of holy hope and consolation? It is called therefore the *Spirit of God*, and said to *proceed from the Father*, and from him to be sent forth into the world. It always counter-operates the Spirit of the *world*: and good christians are said to have *received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God*: by which they are taught to look beyond the present world to a future, and to act upon principles more elevated and extensive than carnal policy. This *Spirit* had, in smaller or greater degrees, animated the saints of former ages, in proportion as they saw the evidences of a future state of recompence, contemplated invisible objects, and deported themselves as pilgrims in the present world. Some attained to a more ample participation of it than others. And Isaiah in particular had such clear and abundant prospects of the *future kingdom* of the Messiah, that he speaks in language which was not too low for Jesus himself to adopt after him. His words explain what it is to be endued with the *Spirit*. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek*: the tidings of a future state of recompence under the dominion of the Messiah. But the *fulness* of this *Spirit* was in Jesus himself: to whom God *gave it not by measure*. And for this reason it is called emphatically the *Spirit of Christ*. On him it rested, as was emblematically figured by that luminous phenomenon, which lighted on him in the resemblance of a dove. A re-

resemblance peculiarly calculated to denote that Jesus was the true messenger from God; the dove being the bird of message. From Christ the Spirit was conveyed to the apostles, and sent forth for the illumination and consolation of the faithful. No part of the intelligence relating to the future administration was concealed from Christ: and what portions of it were afterwards communicated to the world, were altogether derived from his instructions.

But tho' this *Spirit* in the most eminent sense is the Spirit of *Christ*, yet other persons of the *prophetic* character are said to have been *filled* with it, in proportion as their prophetic knowledge related to the evangelic intelligence of a *future* life, and the *government* of the Messiah. Thus when Zacharias, or Simeon, or any other devout person who *looked for the consolation of Israel*, had any illumination concerning the *future kingdom* of the Messiah, the person is said to be *filled with the holy Spirit*, and to prophesy accordingly. On this account John the Baptist is said to have been *filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother's womb*. And thus the evangelical Spirit is called the Spirit of *Prophecy*: the Spirit which looks into *futurity*, in proportion as God reveals his purposes in the gospel. This evangelical Spirit is accordingly styled the Spirit of *wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God*. And inasmuch as it is employed upon the grand counsels of Providence respecting the œconomy of the present and future states of mankind, it is said to *search all things*, and to be conversant in the *deep things of God*. It is called also the Spirit of *Promise*: either on account of its having been promised to the disciples, or by reason of its being occupied in the promises of the gospel. Once also it is styled the Spirit of *Life*: the law of which is said to *set us free from the law of sin and death*. The law of *sin and death* threatens in this language: *Thou shalt surely die*. But the law of the evangelical Spirit (styled therefore the law of the Spirit of *life*) affords

an assurance of *immortality* thro' Christ. The same evangelical Spirit is called in one passage the Spirit of *Grace*: i. e. the Spirit of the gospel of grace. For as *grace* and *truth* came by the gospel, the Spirit of the gospel is therefore styled both the Spirit of *grace*, and the Spirit of *truth*. To this Spirit of gospel-grace, wicked men are said to *do despite*, when they act in opposition to their own knowledge and persuasion that the gospel is divine. In like manner Ananias *lyed* to the evangelical *Spirit*, when, contrary to his conviction of the divinity of the gospel, he thought to practise a fraud upon the apostles and the church. *Why*, says St. Peter, *bath Satan filled thine heart to lye to the holy Spirit?* i. e. Why have you suffered the *evil Spirit*, which opposes the gospel, to fill your heart, and cause you to lye in contempt of the *holy Spirit*? The Spirit of the gospel is a *holy Spirit*, and the Spirit which opposes it is an *evil* one. And this *evil Spirit* is personified under the name of Satan, because it is an enemy to truth and righteousness. For we cannot allow that Satan here is the fallen angel himself, occupying the heart of Ananias, or *filling* it entirely so as to keep out the person of a better Spirit, and prompt Ananias to affront him by a lye, because that would make St. Peter's question appear somewhat unreasonable. *Why bath Satan filled thine heart?* It was not in the power of Ananias to assign the motives of the fallen angel. But, why have you entertained a *wicked Spirit* of opposition to the *holy Spirit* of the gospel: a Spirit which your own heart suggests to you proceeds from God? You have *not* therefore *lyed unto men*, to us apostles, or the society of christians present, *but unto God* himself, whose presence and concurrence with the gospel you have presumed to set at nought by your impious deceit. Once, moreover, in the new testament, this evangelical Spirit is called (tho' no where with greater propriety it is called by any other epithet) the *eternal Spirit*. It is in the epistle to the Hebrews: where the author appears very clearly to oppose that Spirit of *obedience* by which Christ *offered himself*,

himself, to the temporary and mortal nature of Judaical rites and ceremonies. These, says he, in the next chapter, *he taketh away, that he may establish* what is infinitely better, a substantial *obedience*. In *burnt-offerings and sacrifice for sin thou hast had no pleasure*. Then said I (the Messiah) *Lo, I come to do thy will, oh God*. And here the author argues to illustrate the eternity or perpetuity of a Spirit of *obedience*, compared with the temporary duration of external rites. He speaks of *gifts and sacrifices, meats, drinks, washings, and carnal ordinances, which*, says he, *were imposed until the time of reformation*; and his argument runs, that if there could be any purifying or profitable tendency in the *blood of bulls and goats*, and the like, how much more will such tendency appear in the *blood* (or obedience unto death) of Christ, *who thro' the eternal, perpetual Spirit of obedience, offered himself without spot to God*! For *obedience is better than sacrifice*, and of more ancient obligation. And that evangelical *Spirit of obedience*, by which Christ offered himself without spot to God, was and is eternal and everlasting. It is also a Spirit of *holiness*, or the *holy Spirit*. All virtue, purity, goodness, piety, charity, and mercy compose its secret nature. The *fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth*. Or, as it is elsewhere more copiously delineated, The *fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance*. Against such there is no law. And as there is no law in any civilized nation to punish such qualities as these, so there is no wickedness upon earth so great as a defamation of them. A circumstance, which will account more clearly (I believe) than any other consideration, for the severe denunciation of our Saviour against the man who shall blaspheme, or defame, the *holy Spirit*. Had Jesus in that place meant either the *power* or the *person* of God, it is not possible, perhaps, to assign a good reason why the blasphemy should be unpardonable. We are not told in any part of scripture, that blasphemy, even against God himself, shall never

be forgiven. But it is, easy to conceive the reason why blasphemy against the *holy Spirit* of the gospel is said to be unpardonable : because it is a crime which argues a mind to be lost in all moral perdition. The blasphemer of this *Spirit* is one who hates and opposes all righteousness ; defames the very genius of moral excellence ; defames the Spirit of virtue and rectitude itself ; defames *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance*. This person blasphemes the qualities, on which the harmony and happiness of the creation must for ever depend. And a rational being who has thus far perverted the sentiments of nature, and corrupted the faculties of his mind, seems to be totally and finally irrecoverable. With equal clearness, moreover, this explication accounts for two assertions of St. Paul : the latter of which, by the help of any other comment, will hardly be made sense of. *No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed : And no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the holy Spirit*. No man, it is evident, who speaks from the Spirit of love and goodness, will condemn Jesus as an impostor. Nor can any man say, or subscribe to it cordially, that Jesus is constituted *Lord*, who is not so far inspired by the evangelical Spirit as to be a lover of virtue, and a well-wisher to its prevalence and exaltation in the universe. Again, This is the Spirit of *power*, and of *love*, and of a *sound mind*. Of *power*, i. e. of fortitude : for the motives of the gospel arise in power above temptation, in proportion to the influence of reason. Of *love*, because the gospel inspires us with the love of God, who, according to its intelligence, *first loved us* ; and with the love of all his creatures of mankind, whose welfare he has impartially consulted. Of a *sound mind*, in opposition to a wild enthusiasm, or a childish superstition, or that poverty and imbecillity of mind which is discoverable in an implicit faith grounded on the testimony of man.

Last of all, the evangelical Spirit is the Spirit of *Adoption*, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. The Spirit of *adoption* is a Spirit of filial confidence in God; and the joy with which it inspires is called *joy in the holy Spirit*. We read also of *praying in the holy Spirit*: which is being animated in our addresses to God with those filial sentiments of him, which the Spirit of adoption breathes, as becoming children contemplating the indulgence of their Parent. The Spirit of *adoption* inspires a reliance on the paternal goodness of God, to be communicated in every good and generous gift, not excepting the gift of *immortality* to his offspring. For it becomes not the children of the immortal Parent to dread that they shall perish in extinction. We *have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear*, but we *have received the Spirit of adoption*, or sonship, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*. The evangelical Spirit, accordingly, is said to *witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*. This is a natural truth, deducible from calm contemplation on the divine faculties of the human mind. Our own rational spirit suggests to us, that *men are the offspring of God*. And the evangelical Spirit confirms it, and adds its testimony to that of *our spirit*, that this doctrine is true. No passage can be plainer, how widely soever learned men have wandered from the sense of it. The apostle goes on, *If children, then heirs*, heirs of the immortality of our Parent: *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*: whom we are taught to consider as our *brother*, with respect to the inheritance of a resurrection to immortality; and who, on that account, is styled the *first-begotten from the dead*, and the *first-born from the dead*, and the *first-born among many brethren*. In the first production of man, God was his Parent, and in his restoration to life is his Parent still. The resurrection is another *birth*; God who raises is the *Father*; and they that are raised are *sons*, begotten and born *from the dead*, in the elegant language of the scripture. Thus we, says St. Paul, *who have the first-fruits of the evangelical*
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Spirit, are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Of this *Spirit* then, it is elegantly said, that it *helpeth our infirmities*, as it animates us all along in our passage thro' a mortal life (which is called the *valley of the shadow of death*) with a cheerful and magnanimous hope of a future existence. And as it is a Spirit ever pleasing to God, with which he is desirous of inspiring us, it is said to *make intercession for us*, or to recommend us to his favour. Concerning this Spirit of *adoption*, I shall only subjoin, that it causes us to embrace the whole species of mankind, without exception on the ground of any religious mode of doctrine or devotion, as our common brethren, who bear the image of the universal Parent, and are all venerable in the character of his offspring. This benevolent Spirit, which allies itself to the whole intelligent family of God, particularly to all good men in every nation upon earth, is said to *make intercession for the saints, according to the will of God*: who approves of such intercession. And God, says the apostle, *who searcheth the hearts, knoweth the mind of the Spirit* (Φρὲνῶν τὰ Πνεύματος) the inclination of the Spirit, when it so maketh intercession. God *searcheth the hearts* of pious men, who, inspired by the *Spirit of adoption*, *intercede for the saints*: and he *knoweth* the benevolent inclination of the Spirit, under the influence of which *they* pour forth their intercessory petitions. If you understand the inclination of the Spirit to mean the inclination of some celestial being who intercedes for men, then God's searching the hearts of *men* will be no illustration of the certainty of his knowledge of the inclination of such celestial being. But it is a plain illustration of his knowledge of the inclination of a Spirit in the hearts of *men*, prompting *them* to intercession. This interceding Spirit of the gospel cries, *Abba, ὁ Πατήρ*. This remarkable repetition of the word *Father* in two languages, is twice used by St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, who teaches that they and the Jews *have both an access thro' Christ, by one Spirit* (the Spirit

rit of adoption) *unto the Father*. St. Paul borrowed this form of expression from our Saviour, who first used it himself. *Abba*, so called by the Jew, ὦ Πατερ by the Greek. It plainly means, Father of men in every nation, however diversified by various forms of language. Mr. Pope understood the appellation, *Our Father*, in this extensive latitude, as appears from the beginning of his Universal Prayer.

*Father of all! in every age,
In every clime adored.*

And he seems to have imitated the invocation in two languages (the *Abba*, ὦ Πατερ) in the next following lines.

*By saint, by savage, and by sage,
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.*

From all that has been said, we may warrant this conclusion: that the religion which inspires such sentiments, such principles, and such moral and intellectual powers, as have been represented from the view we have taken of this point, cannot be other than divine. By its *fruit* every tree may be discovered, and every doctrine by its Spirit. Christ said of the *holy Spirit* of his religion, that it should *testify of him*. It should attest the truth and divinity of his doctrine. It is one of the *three witnesses*, together with the *Water* and the *Blood*. The *Blood* is the death of martyrs. The *Water* is the heroic baptism of the first christians, who made that public profession of their faith at the hazard of every thing dear to them, with life itself: being *baptized* (as St. Paul expresses it with great energy of language) *upon the dead*: not *for* the dead, as our translators render it, but *upon* the dead (ὕπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν) every new-baptized person, with the drawn sword of persecution before him, adding himself to the heaps of the dead. To the *Water* and the *Blood*, the *Spirit* adds its important attestation. And all three together exhibit one concurring testimony, in proof of the

the divine origin of the gospel. If the authenticity of the much controverted verse, of the *three that bear record in heaven*, is to be doubted on the ground of the want of it in the Greek manuscripts, and the non-citation of it by ancient writers who cite the verses before and after it, tho' we are the less concerned on that account to furnish a satisfactory sense to it, yet it may be observed, that a perspicuous one is not far from hand. The *Father* in heaven, the *Word*, or Gospel from heaven, and the *Spirit* of the gospel from heaven, join their testimonies in *one* to the truth of the divine mission of Jesus. In each of the verses the *Spirit* is one of the witnesses. And accordingly, the *Name*, or Authority, of the *Spirit* is one of the authorities on which the apostles were to baptize and disciple the nations. It was a work of too much importance to be undertaken without the best and highest authorities for it. And therefore when Christ enjoins them their errand, he thinks proper to inform them on what authorities they were to proceed in this work of their apostleship. They were to baptize the nations, first in the *name*, or by the authority, of God himself, the *Father*, who had given his attestation to the gospel by various interpositions of a power unquestionably divine; next in the *name*, or by the authority, of the *Son* of God, who gave them his commission to make converts; and lastly in the *name*, or by the authority, of the *Spirit*, which gave its testimony to the gospel, by its purity and holiness, and by the excellency of its productions. The *Spirit* is the internal evidence of Christianity; an evidence which is inseparable from it; and would remain an ample and sufficient testification, altho' there should not be a person in the world, either to profess the gospel, or to suffer in its vindication. But yet it is possible, that by corrupting our religion, we may deprive it of the honour and advantage of its original Spirit. Genuine Christianity will always have a genuine

genuine good Spirit attending it. Corrupt Christianity will be accompanied with a corrupt Spirit. And it may be affirmed, that the misconceptions even of this one point to which we have been attending, may have given a very material turn to the genius of the gospel. For if, instead of investigating the true sense of the very numerous passages where it speaks of its own *Spirit*, we lose sight of the rational and simple idea, and call for the aid of I know not what dark and metaphysical subtleties about essences, personalities, quiddities, quantities, and totalities, to guide us in our interpretations, in what mazes and perplexities may we not be involved! what doctrines, never thought of by the writers of the new testament, may be grounded on their authority! and what an enormous body of unscriptural and false theology may become incorporated with the true gospel-code: destroying its simplicity, its reasonableness, and conformity to the sound judgement of mankind! Shall we not in proportion lose the witness of the Spirit in its favour? For the Spirit of a religion which abounds with obscurity and mystery, unintelligible and impossible propositions, must differ very much from the Spirit of a plain, simple, and consistent form of doctrine, such as the gospel of Jesus reveals to us. The one will be the Spirit *which is of God*. But the other, I fear, will partake too much of the Spirit of the *world*, the Spirit of imposture, interest, and policy; and will hardly fail to manifest that Spirit in its measures to advance and support itself in the human society.

Now, may we not deduce the excellence of the christian religion from the nature of its Spirit? And may we not perceive a striking mark of its truth in its ingenuous reference to that Spirit as a proof of its divine original? By this the gospel is willing to be tried. It requires us not to be implicit in our faith, nor to *believe every Spirit*, but to *try the Spirits whether they are of God*.

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It presents us also with the infallible criteria. The *wisdom* which is *earthly, sensual, diabolical, descendeth not from above*. But the *wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*. The former of these has certainly operated in the church of Christ, to the opprobrium of the christian name. But let not the bloody and revengeful disposition of the ecclesiastics of former ages be attributed to the genius of the gospel; nor let the wars, the massacres, and depopulations of Christendom be charged upon the truest philanthropist that ever adorned humanity. Christians at the first conducted themselves agreeably to the innocence and goodness of their faith. Nor till their faith was corrupted, did they fall from the integrity of their manners. As soon as their simple and amiable form of doctrine was explained away, and concealed in clouds of mystery and legendary fable, the Spirit of the gospel was lost to the churches; and Christians became actuated by the Spirit of corrupt Christianity. The outrages they committed, and the confusion and misery they created in the world, were not produced by the Spirit of the gospel, but by the Spirit of mystery and legendary fable. It is as romantic to expect, that Christians, informed by a corrupted faith, should exhibit the true genius of Christianity, as that the Spirit of *adoption* and the Spirit of *bondage* should shew themselves in the same behaviour, or that the Spirit of *fear* and the Spirit of *fortitude* should make men equally courageous. A scheme of doctrine which abounds with abstruse and inexplicable propositions, cannot possibly have the same friendly operation in human society as a luminous, perspicuous, and intelligible code, which approves itself to common sense and sanity of judgment. But here I must correct myself, if a recent paradoxical doctrine is to be credited, that *Mysteries promote Philanthropy*. Let us enter into the question. Let us take some proposition of the new testament concerning the *Spirit*. *God hath sent forth the Spirit*

of adoption into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. This is plain, simple, and intelligible. And it is a truth which undoubtedly is calculated above all things to inspire us with the sublimest and purest affection for the human race. No doctrine can tend more to conciliate the minds of men in esteem for one another, and to promote universal peace, equity, moderation, forbearance, mildness, generosity, and compassion. But let us try if by the help of scholastic jargon we cannot refine this simple proposition, and work it up into a mystery. And when it is sufficiently metamorphosed in that new shape, let us examine its effect upon Philanthropy. *God sent forth the Spirit of adoption into the world. But this Spirit was the very God who sent it. For God both sent the Spirit, and was the Spirit which he sent. And yet he did not send himself, but the Spirit. Their individual sameness does not destroy the reality of the mission of the one by the other; nor does the reality of such mission make them numerically two.* This, you will say, is mystery. And will this jargon promote Philanthropy? Or is it not rather the former plain, evangelical proposition, to which the honour of promoting Philanthropy is due? I know you will tell me, that such palpable contradictions, with the solemn air of a scriptural doctrine, on which they pretend to be founded, are sufficient to set the world in flames. For the natural operation of mystery will appear in wrath, contention, and fiery debate, with furious and unpeaceable attempts to supply the infirmities of its cause by the help of a compulsive jurisdiction. In short, it cannot expect to be promoted without a violation of the social bond, by laws not founded in the principles of law.

There is one very material consequence from the disquisition we have been making, which ought not to be concealed. It is indeed unavoidable to remark, that the light which has been thrown on the passages concerning the *Spirit*, accounts very sufficiently for
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the want of any one command or precedent in the sacred scriptures, for any act of homage or adoration to a separate divine being under this denomination, and for the want of one single mention of any such being among the inhabitants of the celestial state. Circumstances these, which have contributed not a little to the perplexity and astonishment of many pious Christians who have followed the systematical theology, and which might well have raised in them a suspicion, that the mode of interpretation, on which that theology is founded, might possibly be erroneous. They were not culpable, however, for adhering to that mode, till they were furnished with another which might give ample content, and be liable to no exception. And as none of the schemes commonly deemed hæretical could with justice carry their pretensions to so great a height, the reputed orthodox were justified in their steadiness, so long as they supported it with christian moderation and forbearance. It is high time, notwithstanding, to discard from divinity, and particularly from forms of worship, the abstruse language of metaphysic and the schools: which we may be perfectly assured can never faithfully convey the meaning of any doctrine in the word of God. It is the duty of the churches to encourage every liberal disquisition into the sense of scripture, and to re-examine their public formularies: which, having been fabricated in times less luminous than the present, may possibly be unequal to the deference which has been paid them by so long an acquiescence. If some of our invocations and doxologies are so exceptionable in point of *phraseology*, that they are liable to be mistaken as idolatrous by a prejudiced or superficial observer, particularly by a Jew or a Mussulman unaccustomed to such language, and possessed with the greatest horror of the least shadow of a depredation on the divine Unity, it behoves us to consider whether it is a sufficient justification of ourselves, that our devotions are all addressed as to the One God only. So far as the *Spirit* which proceeds from God

is concerned in them, it ought to be considered under the notion of the supreme Divinity having manifested himself in or by that *Spirit of holiness* to the world : a representation, which is not unscriptural, and against which the soberest reason will possibly not militate. We adore God in Nature, in every mode of his agency and operation, in whatsoever he has chosen to display the qualities of his invisible and incomprehensible Mind. And in like manner we may adore him in the *Spirit of holiness*, that secret Principle of agency, which operates either mechanically or morally, and manifests itself by its productions to originate in God. But whether we can vindicate ourselves or not, to the content of all, in the use of every part of our forms, yet certainly a regard ought to be had to the effect which their unsatisfactory, scholastic phrases and definitions may have, in giving to our own people obscure and unamiable views of their religion, and confirming in their prejudices against it the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Deist : from whom the most we can expect is, that they will judge us with rigid justice ; not that they will make one favourable allowance for our deficiencies, on account of any adventitious difficulties, real or supposed, arising from the delicacy of the times.

Upon the whole then, it is the duty of the christian ministry in every church, to hold forth to the world a genuine representation of the gospel, and to preserve it pure from any taint or corruption. And it is incumbent on them, by the weight of the most tremendous obligations, to be diligent in their enquiries, and ingenuous in communicating their discoveries, for the common illumination. An accidental interference with the doctrine of a formulary (which perhaps may contradict *itself* in its different parts) is no warrantable cause for their suppression of a truth. They owe no such deference to human authority. Nor can the clergy of any Protestant church fulfil their obligations to

that church, unless they oppose every unscriptural tenet, whether it has the sanction of the formulary or not. The Protestant churches lay no claim to infallibility ; and therefore cannot mean by their formularies to decide in all matters of controversy, either for the present or future ages. If to disclaim infallibility, and then to decide, has the air of inconsistency, it is high time to amend and be more uniform. In the mean while, it behoves the Protestant ministry to fulfil their obligations to the best of their ability. And if, in particular cases, they must either make free with an article, or disguise the sense of the holy scripture, an honest man will not long hesitate which of the two should be sacrificed. Had the clergy of the Church of England invariably idolized the authority of her articles, and been deterred by their decision from investigating the sense of scripture in every instance where they found them to militate, all the great and respectable names of her most illustrious divines would have been wanting to procure her the reverence of all Europe ; the ever-living volumes of Barrow, Bull, South, Lloyd, Clarke, Butler, and the two Sherlocks, would have been lost to the world ; and many of the present ornaments of the Bench Ecclesiastical (whom I need not name) must have laid down their pens, and forfeited their immortality. Yet if, in imitation of those illustrious persons, any clergyman undertakes to examine by common sense, or explain by just criticism, the divinity of the new testament, he is accused of the high crime of preaching down the articles. If, from the dread of such a charge, he declines that labour, and contents himself with inculcating the social virtues, from the same quarter instantly proceeds a cry, that he is a dry moralist, and a Heathen philosopher. To what end then should we be manacled any longer with a chain of almost forty links, unless it be for the sake of accommodating our defamers, and furnishing them with futile accusations pernicious to our utility ? Yet this notwithstanding, it would be the height

height of absurdity (not to say of *impiety* also) if we should pay more regard to our articles than to the scripture, when the articles themselves declare their decisions to be without authority, if not supported by the word of God; and when the Church requires of us a sacred vow, at our first admission to her ministry, that we will pursue all studies which tend to improve us in the knowledge of the *scriptures*; that from *them* we will instruct the flock of Christ; will drive away all erroneous doctrines contrary to *them*; and teach nothing but what we shall be persuaded may be concluded and demonstrated by them. Let those who charge us with departing from our articles, bring proof that the Church intended by them to preclude all farther enquiries after the sixteenth century till the sound of the last trumpet; and then it will be time enough to consider, whether they are to be studied as the test of scripture, or scripture as the test of *them*. Let us go on then, as the Church and Common sense require us, in our disquisitions into the meaning of the scripture, and take the formulary for a direction, so far as it may direct us right; treating it with the respect which is due to every comment of pious and studious men, who made the most of the light which their times afforded them, or as a Guide of antiquity, since the erection of which the roads have been considerably altered.

But there are other considerations which require our most serious regard. We are accountable to a Monarch, who can save or destroy us; who commands the elements, and gives law to the powers of universal nature. Who shall dare to disobey him; or, having received a command to declare his truths, shall decline the errand, in submission to any human interdiction! We have a Lord, who deserves from us the best services we can render for the honour of his gospel; and who will expect us to follow him in a brave and
disinterested

disinterested pursuit of truth and virtue. All things are conspiring, under the divine administration, to bring on a most grand and desirable issue. And it becomes every servant of God and his Messiah to look forward beyond the age in which he lives, and do some work for posterity. That remote posterity I mean, which shall behold the great machine of providence wound up and compleated: when he, to whom the kingdoms of the earth belong by the purchase of his blood, shall take possession of them, and cause righteousness to dwell in them for ever. Then will the wise and excellent of every former period, who in their several ages contributed their portion to the final result (being restored to existence by the most benignant power) take their turn in far happier climates, and share the approbation of the king of kings. These are the prospects which should disengage a Christian from the study of the arts of shining and accumulating in this world: and, fixing his attention upon truth and virtue, in obedience to one who is able to reward him, make him happy even here, in the possession of the *favour of Christ*, and the *love of God*, and the participation of that *Spirit of holiness*, which animates with joy and consolation, and inspires with all fortitude and wisdom. May that Spirit be glorified by a reception throughout the world, and the gospel which it attests be cordially and gratefully accepted! May the great Fountain of blessedness, the paternal Source of nature, be adored with supreme devotion! And may Jesus, the restorer of a world in ruins, be celebrated with the sublime praises due to his benevolence, and extolled and worshipped with the superlative honours of his mediatorial empire!

F I N I S.



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